



Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

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Austria

Agricultural Situation

Austrian Agency for Health and Nutrition Safety

2002

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Report Highlights:

The Agriculture and the Social Security Ministers reached agreement on centralizing their testing institutes under one agency. This should provide for efficient tests and thus raise food safety.

Includes PSD changes: No

Includes Trade Matrix: No

Unscheduled Report

Vienna[AU1], AU

Summary

The Agriculture and the Social Security Ministers reached agreement on centralizing their testing institutes under one agency. This should provide for efficient tests and thus raise food safety from farm to table. The new agency will be based on a health and nutrition safety law that will be implemented in June 2002. End Summary

Legal Matters

Recently, Agricultural Minister Wilhelm Molterer and Social Security Minister Herbert Haupt achieved an agreement on a new Austrian Agency for Health and Nutrition Safety (AAHNS). On February 12, the parliamentary agricultural committee approved the creation of this agency.

The new agency will be based on a new health and nutrition safety law that will be implemented on July 1, 2002. The intended law will bundle the control and monitoring functions of both ministries in the areas of feed regulation, pesticide approval, seed certification, veterinary regulations, and food testing. Eighteen thus far individual federal institutes and federal offices will be concentrated in four locations, which are: Vienna, Graz, Linz, and Innsbruck.

AAHNS Institutes

AAHNS integrate the federal office and research center for agriculture, the federal institute for agricultural biology, the federal institute for dairy economy, and the Salzburg federal environmental institute from the Agricultural Ministry and five federal institutes for food testing, four federal institutes for veterinary testing, and five bacteriological-serological federal institutes from the Social Security Ministry. The labor force of the agency will number more than 1,200.

Financing

According to Molterer, AAHNS will receive Euro 57 million from the federal budget annually in the first three years. In 2005 and 2006, the federal contribution will be gradually reduced to around Euro 55 million. Construction works will be financed by the government and investments of Euro 15 million required for the creation of the agency will also be provided. In addition, AAHNS will be allowed to collect money for non-governmental services.

Works

Main works of AAHNS:

- Testing and evaluation of samples according to the Austrian food codex and EU requirements.
- Testing and evaluation in accordance with federal veterinary regulations and the bee epidemic law.
- Protection and prevention of human infectious disease.
- Monitoring food for quality.
- Testing and evaluating in the framework of the federal institute for nutrition safety.
- Research and information concerning crisis situations (food recall, disease outbreaks, etc.).

Opposition Skeptical

While Molterer regards the new agency as a step forward in achieving efficient oversight from the farm to the table, critics agree that the Agricultural Ministry is overly influenced by producers. In addition, they fear that the fact that the agency is working under two ministries may lead to compromises that are not in the interest of the consumer. The opposition would prefer to have the agency only under the Ministry for social security, which is seen as representing consumers.